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10 April 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Information Requirements Advisory Group Members

SUBJECT : IRAG Meeting

1. The Information Requirements Advisory Group will meet at 1530 on 19 April 1968 in Room 7E44, Headquarters, to discuss the Current Intelligence Reporting List (CIRL). Discussion will begin with Recommendations 10, 11 and 12 of the I.G. Survey on Information Requirements but will also consider any other modifications in the CIRL which the members consider to be desirable or necessary.

2. Attached is a brief paper setting forth some facts and observations concerning the CIRL as it is seen by the Information Requirements Staff. This paper is intended only to provide a basis for discussion and to highlight a few factors for consideration by IRAG.

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EDWARD W. PROCTOR
Chairman
Information Requirements Advisory Group

Attachment: a/s

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The Concept of the CIRL

The CIRL identifies valid specific needs for information on topics that are of current interest to the intelligence community. Its primary purpose is to advise human source collectors to report on these needs if information is readily at hand. As the recent I.G. Survey describes it, the CIRL is "...a collection of questions of current interest...for which answers are requested if a means already exists for acquiring them". Thus the CIRL is intended to guide field reporting; it is not intended to cause the collector either to mount new collection programs or to take actions that are not in conformance with the formal guidance and directives issued by his own management.

This concept means that questions contributed to the CIRL should be validated by division chiefs in accordance with the established criteria for "available sources".

The CIRL provides a medium through which the analyst can communicate his current specific needs to a spectrum of potential reporters. In many instances it is difficult for headquarters personnel to determine which of many possible field reporters may be able to respond at a given moment in time to specific questions on a matter of current concern to an analyst. The CIRL, because of its wide distribution, serves to alert reporters to these needs without the necessity of repeating them in an endless succession of ad-hoc requirements levied through multiple channels.

Design of the CIRL

The CIRL is produced in seven separate editions, each of which covers a different geographic area of the world and each of which is published three times a year as a means of maintaining its currency. Each edition is formatted on the basis of political, economic, scientific, and military areas of intelligence. All Agency production offices contribute to some editions of the CIRL and some offices contribute to all editions. All USIB Agencies have been invited to participate; the Department of State has begun to do so on a selective basis, but DIA does not yet make any contributions.

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Each of the 7 area editions has unique characteristics which reflect the peculiarities of intelligence interest and modes of collection applied to that area. The concerns of each production office will vary greatly among each of the areas. Therefore, the CIRL as a whole can be discussed in terms of production schedules, format, etc., but substantive content must be discussed in terms of a specific area edition (i.e., USSR, Latin America, etc.).

The Uses of the CIRL

Despite the fact that the CIRL is not regarded as an action document, it is widely read in the field and all human source collectors put it to some use. The Clandestine Services use it as: (1) a supplement to guidance received through the chain of command, (2) an area familiarization tool and, (3) operational support.

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The Department of State does not embrace the CIRL program officially, but there is evidence that field personnel find it useful and do report against it. Smaller posts (country teams) have submitted airgrams in which they answer each CIRL question in order, and in one instance the ambassador, himself, was principal author. On another occasion an economic counselor in a large embassy stated that the CIRL was "...essential for our operations here. . . . When covering an economy half the size of the U.S. with three men, we must concentrate on gaps in information rather than the whole economy". This point assumes greater significance now, in view of present overseas personnel cut-backs.

Quality of the Questions

The main criticisms of the CIRL have been levied at two aspects of the questions themselves. Many of the questions are too general to fit the CIRL concept, and many appear in several consecutive issues. These are probably two aspects of the same problem, i.e., as the questions become more specific and current, they will become less repetitive.

The key to solution of this problem appears to lie in preparing questions which reflect as clearly as possible the extent to which the writer is already informed on his subject and the specific additional

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information which he wants within the time frame of that edition. For example, rather than ask "What organizations in Yugoslavia are doing so-and-so", a more effective question might be, "It has been reported that as of March 1968, Organization X has shifted its effort from A to B. Please confirm and report role in Program B." This approach points up the current state of knowledge and the specific information need and helps the collector to understand exactly what his customer wants. As a word of caution, however, this does not mean that lengthy background statements are necessary. A leading sentence or two may do the job, or the question itself may be worded so that it includes an adequate amount of guidance.

The CIRL has also been criticized on occasion because it includes questions on areas of low intelligence priority such as [REDACTED] This criticism is infrequent, however, and causes little concern as long as we have analysts who have valid needs for collection of information on [REDACTED] For the moment, the CIRL is the most appropriate means of expressing these needs.

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Comprehensiveness of Content

The CIRL must be sufficiently comprehensive to represent the spectrum of information needs during the period of issue. However, this very fact creates problems for both analyst and collector.

The analyst is asked on the one hand to provide all of his current legitimate needs. On the other hand, he is cautioned not to let the CIRL degenerate into an overall "wish list" into which are poured all conceivable intelligence curiosities. Inevitably, the distinction becomes blurred, and there are always some unrealistic questions submitted out of misunderstanding or "just in case" the requestor should be held accountable some day.

The collector may have difficulty in realizing that he is not expected to be the sole reporter for every item in the CIRL. OCI analysts, for example, tend to write for the CIA station or the political section of the embassy, while OSI people may write for DCS or for military collectors. Thus, a given question can belabor the obvious for one reporter while failing to provide enough detail for another. In this sense the CIRL is not so much a stew pot, into which all questions are dumped for equal consumption by all, as it is a smorgasbord which displays individual dishes and from which a selection is made on the basis of reporting capability. Failure to appreciate this characteristic of the publication can lead to frustration on the collector's part.

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